

regime's real intention, which is to return the West Bank to Hashemite dominance. It is Amman's belief that a suitable atmosphere can be maintained with application of the stick and carrot policy, and that a campaign of misinformation can gloss over the reason for forming a government headed by a previous chief of the intelligence.

In this light, even Laila Sharaf, the new Minister of Information, claiming to be liberal, appears more repellent than the Prime Minister himself, who has not appeared much until now. Sharaf has made many statements claiming Jordan's full responsibility for the West Bank, and also about Jordanian-Palestinian unity, based on the Acria (Jericho) Conference in 1948, when it was decided to link the remaining parts of Palestine to the Hashemite Kingdom. Lastly, and most significantly, Sharaf has claimed that a minimum of attention should be accorded the 1974 Rabat Summit's decisions, which recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Needless to say, King Hussein's confirmation of the Rabat decisions was only a formality - a maneuver adopted while awaiting circumstances in the Arab and Palestinian arenas that would allow for renegeing on the recognition of the PLO's representation and allowing for reusurpation of Palestinian national rights.

The freezing of parliamentary life in Jordan and the formation of a temporary council, the National Consultative Council, were in themselves a proof of the regime's real intentions vis-a-vis the West Bank, which became apparent with the recent steps taken by Amman, whereby the parliament was revived as a legislature for both banks. Calling the parliament and amending article 73 of the constitution, to enable elections in Jordan and for West Bank deputies to be appointed by Jordanian MPs, exposed the regime's claim to responsibility for the West Bank, and its aim to have this responsibility recognized in Arab and international circles.

King Hussein affirmed Jordanian responsibility for the West Bank in his "Throne Speech" (the government declaration delivered to the National Assembly's regular sessions). The same message was repeated in the response to the "Throne Speech", the later government declaration, and Crown Prince Hassan (the King's delegate) in his speech to the 4th Islamic Conference held in Casablanca, Morocco, on January 16th.

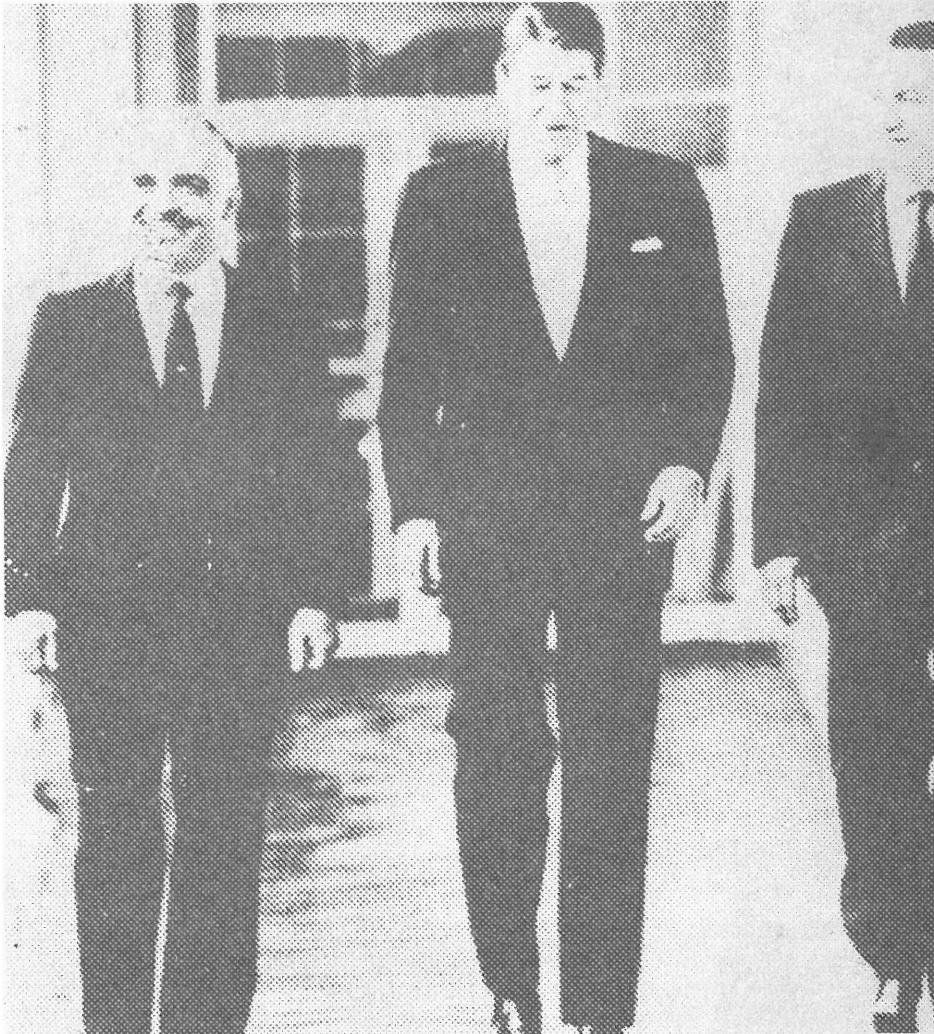
To the same purpose, Jordan received the Egyptian Minister of the Economy, Mustafa Said, and dispatched Abu Oudeh, the Minister of the Royal Court, to Cairo to meet Husni Mubarak and

discuss the ways deemed best by the King to resolve the Middle East conflict.

Careful scrutiny of the recent official Jordanian declarations reveals two points: first, reviving the Jordanian option on everything relating to the Palestinian question; and second, returning Egypt to Arab officialdom. In the present situation, Hussein deemed that pushing the Jordanian option, presented as the only possible solution for the Palestinian question, would not antagonize anyone in official Arab politics. To Amman, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are minor

this, according to Amman, would leave no excuses for others not to withdraw; also, this would boost the capacity of the Lebanese authorities. (2) Stopping Zionist settlement-building on the West Bank; however, Amman has only demanded a stoppage, not asked for the abolition of the settlements built since 1967.

As is well-known, the Jordanian regime attributes the failure of the "peaceful" settlement to US hesitation and Israeli stubbornness. According to King Hussein, if the Israeli Labor Party assumes power, this would overcome



matters which should not now be pressed, for all priority should be given to saving "the family and the land" (the favorite expression of official Jordanian information).

The mechanism needed to implement the Jordanian option has been clearly spelled out in two press conferences held by King Hussein and in Hassan's speech at the Islamic Summit. This depends on the US's calculations and ability to make good its promises concerning two matters: (1) Solving the Lebanese crisis by the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, as

some obstacles, pushing the "peace" process ahead. Then the US would be given the chance to make good its promises, since Peres, Labor Party leader, presents himself as responsive to the prospects of a peaceful settlement regarding the West Bank, claiming readiness to stop new settlement-building near Arab population centers (though, of course, not to remove the old). The Jordanian regime hopes to inject its own role to resolve the remaining obstacle with the Labor Party, i.e., the fact that it is willing to negotiate